

Hydrologic Regional Boundaries

The Situation:

- NMSA 72-14-43 says “the future water needs of New Mexico can best be met by allowing each region of the state to plan for its water future.”
- But what makes sense to be a so-called “region”?
- Let’s look again at the slide with regional dissections of the state.
- The upper left shows ISC’s traditional regions, a hybrid of political and historic decisions
- Water planning regions have minimal relation to OSE management districts (upper right).
- They mostly ignore hydrology – with aquifers, watersheds and stream systems often spanning regional boundaries.
- Over decades, we’ve also found regions frequently being much larger than the scale of problems that need solution – Participants get discouraged and abandon the process when they have to sit through issues in a far distant part of the region.
- The need for change surfaced repeatedly in the ISC’s December 2017 town hall on water

How to Reconcile:

- Water planning should follow the water
- Some problems need to be addressed at a local level, far smaller than a region.
- Other problems require consideration across regional boundaries.
- We recommend that new regional boundaries encompass whole basins (or collections of whole basins).
- In the case of MRG, LRG, and perhaps other interstate stream systems, the regional boundaries should be dictated by compact measurement or obligation criteria.
- Each region should be locally dissected into one or more subregions or locales based on the individual hydrologic and demographic attributes of the region.
- We suggest a grassroots process for performing planning.
- Subregional planners should identify the local goals, objectives, problems and then plan prioritized remedies of those problems.

(over)

- Regional planners, made up of representatives from the subregions, should address regional or basin goals and problems – like compacts, declining shared aquifers. They ensure that subregional plans do not step on the toes of each other, and in aggregate meet the obligations of the whole basin. The regional planners need also to deal with prioritizing funds deployment among subregions.
- And regional/basin plans must adhere to the generalized overall policies put forth by the state, and justify to the state the needs for funds within the regions, which in turn must seek and deploy available funds to regions.